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# The American Historical Review

## THE EDITORIAL FUNCTION IN UNITED STATES HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

THE long line of my abler predecessors in office has given expression to many views and convictions. There are definitions of history, the application of historical principles, the interpretation of periods or of events, and experiment in forecasting the future in terms of the past. Scholar, publicist, and public servant have expressed their beliefs, outlined their hopes, and even intimated their disappointments in historical language. After such a series of treatments the field has been so well gleaned as to leave little yet to be garnered. If therefore I say a word for an historical agency on which almost no words have been spent, my apology must cover at once the poverty of the subject and the comparatively low rank of the agency. I refer to the editor of original sources of history, the ginning or picking machine which deals with the raw material, the first stage toward the warp and woof of historical writing.

Let us start with something definite. "Was it you", wrote an Englishman to Joseph Jefferson, the actor, "or was it your grandfather, who wrote the Declaration of Independence?" The inquirer and the question are always with us and one of the objects of writing and teaching history is to make both harmless, if not impossible. And the lowest round of the ladder of accomplishment is the editor. He assumes the existence of the anxious inquirer, he seeks to measure his wants, and he frames the answer on such a plane as to hit the average degree of ignorance. "Ignorance", wrote Emerson in his journal, "is but an appetite which God made us to gratify." The editor is a source of information and a measure of quantity suited to a dose. A physician selects his remedies on case practice, on a range of experience which has eliminated

<sup>1</sup> Presidential address read before the American Historical Association, at Philadelphia, December 27, 1917.

every factor of doubt but the personal equation of the subject. The giver of information has few rules based on experience for his guidance, and has a double personal equation to meet—that of his subject and that of his questioner. No wonder the failures are many.

The art is comparatively new, for it arose out of myth and fable and is still painfully groping towards truth. Evolutionists tell us that the development of moral concepts has been as gradual and certain as the development of physical characteristics, and some would lay down a rule of thumb to show how the ideas of truth, right, and justice have been evolved from moral nescience. What would the writer of history not give for such a standard or measure! The pleasure and the relief of being able to determine thus almost mechanically the degree of faith to be given to this or that relator; the delight of placing him in his proper stage of development and the mastery of purpose which would follow—what boons to the plodding reader who must rest his story upon what others, of another time and place, have related. The strata of dependence thus defined would mean a scientific test for reliability, something far beyond the existing method of setting relator against relator and accepting the mean as truth.

Three centuries ago, before there was a wide public to be gulled, the little circle of readers was given on the death of a great man a volume of his testament or parting advice. The contents had just enough verisimilitude to be accepted in part, and the advice was wholly interested. The practice common in its day on the Continent of Europe easily slipped into the later form of memoirs, and from the memoirs came biography. To pass upon the career of a public man immediately after his death involves no light task. The secretarial writer, of which Boswell is such a shining example, may be truthful and interesting; but if he is sincere and loyal he will not lightly relate what may tell against his employer. That appeal to prurient curiosity which finds a market in sensation, has been framed in many ways, and still attracts support. A Pepys holds up a personal mirror with the reflecting surface towards himself, and unconsciously gives material for judging others and his own times such as no serious-minded historian could give and such as no writer on Pepys's period can neglect. The little has become the important.

The United States has not been rich in self-written history, nor is the little it possesses, of startling moment. An explanation offered by some declares the lack of real interest in American history. However rich in pictures and incidents it does not present

flashes and explosions of overwhelming importance. Another explanation is that its people have been too occupied in opening territory to settlement and development to expend much energy on recording and explaining the course of events, much less the participation in the struggle where the overscrupulous were doomed to defeat. A third would say that a democracy is against good history, for it means a slow vulgarizing of the best. No such explanations will account for the absence of those willing and able to relate their own careers after their own point of view. Their names should be legion. The foreign visitor, in the rawest period of our growth, has not failed in picturesque, even lurid contrast, and has not found us inarticulate on ourselves or bashful of suggesting our merits. If the tone has been one of bluster rather than of philosophic analysis, it is genuine and not assumed, even to the wincing at the reflection returned by the not too faultless mirror.

In colonial New England publicity in the religious experiences of members or would-be members of the churches was exacted. If printed they take rank with the confessions of condemned criminals just reprieved, interesting not for their content, but for the state of mind and surroundings they show. They constitute a necessary item in the social history of the time, a crude form of the third degree, by which it was hoped a corner of the curtain of the soul, the token of immortal man, would be raised. The diaries, chiefly kept in interleaved almanacs by the ministers, were never intended for the public eye, and rarely rise above the level of a record of church ministration, with items of farm and household of a singularly bald nature. Once in a great while some one has the itch of putting all his thoughts and feelings on paper, and in seeking to imitate St. Augustine in frankness and scope, presents the most repellent features of religious ecstasism. Sainthood and martyrdom are able to endure that form of exhibition; but the atmosphere of early New England lacks in the quality which makes martyrdom picturesque; and this self-immolation to dogma long since passed away leaves the reader cold, even in a critical frame of mind. Did the situation of soul really demand this suffering? Is it not the symptom of physical derangement so easily mistaken for a divine afflatus? Of the sincerity of the sufferer there need be no doubt; but for permanent effect the acting is a little overdone.

Whence comes this expansiveness which often mounts to the grotesque; this tendency to publicity of thought and action? It is not English, for that people avoid exhibitions of feeling lest they make themselves ridiculous. It is not French, for they have a better

sense of finish and proportion. It is not Scottish, for they are too canny to waste even emotion without some definite return. The Irish have a humor that saves them from ridicule, though it does not endow them with the needed balance-wheel of wisdom. The sentiment of Germany overruns proper bounds, but is not reflected in the leading examples of American self-written biography. The American expression is peculiar, a proper accompaniment of a territory almost without limits. Virgin land at settlement, it had a strong influence on those who came to it. Its symbol is a screaming eagle, and who would blame an eagle for screaming in boundless space? Every American claims the right of free utterance. As a child he has used it, as a man he has abused it, the only restraint being a wholesome fear of the law of libel or an appeal to the medieval and murderous code of honor. Even this right of utterance is quite modern.

Censorship of the press, one stage in the development, is an historical survival, and in English-speaking countries (except Ireland) is merely of historical importance. Liberty "to know, to utter and to argue" Milton placed above all other liberties; but so long as it could be interpreted by an autocratic ruler, by virtue of an undefined general prerogative, the liberty existed only in name. Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia* made it punishable by death to speak against the ruling power, and by one of those strange sequences of events he was himself brought to trial for countenancing the pretensions of a nun who was charged with treasonable language. Freedom came slowly, and such was the effect of the supervision of the press that under the Restoration the newspaper press was practically reduced to the *London Gazette*—an official and inspired organ. In two centuries and a half such interferences have been abolished. While Great Britain has, after its fashion, never rested the freedom of the press on law but on its unwritten constitution, the United States have gloried in its recognition in their bills of right, an essential part of their constitutions. The price paid is a confusion of tongues, a multiplicity of opinion which produces indigestion, and an absence of standards which permits the glorification of the seamy and the sordid as freely as of the great and the admirable. Laudation of self and institutions is justified by accomplishment, and if it is pitched in too high a key is excusable by its honesty.

One compensation may be found in this discordant circle of self-praise, filial praise, and disciple praise. The note is unharmonious even in development. There has not long existed a studied

combination singing praises of one man or one policy; at no time do we trace that blind sacrifice of opinion which marks the devoted adherent to faction, to party, to Church or to State. There has been no suggestion of general interference by the state to impose upon the people a single interpretation of policy outside of law. The opposition has been as free as the supporters of government, and the third or independent party, or the silent independent voter, tends to correct such an overwhelming drift as could be interpreted as an unrestricted mandate from the people to their representatives, or from the government to the people. Except in great crises the American conception of liberty of speech has been maintained, and in the severe crises, as Rhodes says of the War of Secession, the great principles of liberty have not been invalidated by the exercise of extraordinary powers, although the arbitrary exercise of those powers was to be condemned. Even against the government the citizen can invoke the protection of the courts.

Self-editing finds expression in autobiography, and the one great example of American autobiography is that of Franklin, written, be it remembered, late in life, and never finished. Unable to live his life over again in fact, he took the nearest to it, to make a recollection of that life as durable as possible by putting it down in writing. And he gratified his vanity in so doing, believing that vanity is "often productive of good to the possessor, and to others that are within his sphere of action; and therefore, in many cases, it would not be altogether absurd if a man were to thank God for his vanity among the other comforts of life". The entire relation is redolent of a studied frankness that lulls the reader into a forgetfulness of much in Franklin's career that a moralist would dwell upon. I almost fancy that Cotton Mather would have been pleased to preach the last sermon heard by the condemned Benjamin Franklin. And the circumstance would have been possible, for Franklin was born in 1706 and Mather lived until 1728. The autobiography was first published in 1817, and could occasion no serious controversy; but the papers printed with the autobiography by the grandson did arouse comment on both sides of the ocean, more for what had been omitted than for what had been included. The question of an interference by the British government is not one which need delay us in passing. That government and that people have not shown strong inclinations to edit their expressions on America and its history, least of all at the time the Franklin volumes appeared. Jefferson intimated that William Temple Franklin may have been "an accomplice in the parricide of the memory of his immortal

grandfather", but the result of the publication gave proof of the incapacity of the grandson. There is not a line of Franklin's writings which could not have seen the light in 1817 with as little injury to his reputation as in 1917.

An earlier and the earliest printed autobiography after the War for Independence appeared in 1798. Major-General William Heath took us into his confidence in the form of a journal of events compiled after his active service was past, and published, it has been charged, before its intended time, to promote an election to office. Fully acquainted by his studies, as he believed, "with the theory of war in all its branches and duties, from the private soldier to the Commander in Chief", he wrote sometimes as a private and sometimes as generalissimo. He was the preacher of preparedness from 1770, and like most such preachers was lacking in action. A trusted lieutenant, he attained rank without distinction, and grew corpulent in inaction and performance. "Our General", as he pleases to call himself, a term reported to have been applied to him by Bernard in one of his prophetic moments, printed his book, which was greeted by smiles on all sides. It was impossible to misinterpret such a delightful piece of vanity. Its historical value shrinks before its personal quality.

Gradually an interest in personal history was awakened. In biography Marshall's *Life of Washington* was easily first to challenge attention. It was based upon original documents; it appeared at a time when the power of the Federalists had been shattered, and their shrewdest opponent was in full possession of the executive. Did Marshall intend to raise a monument to Washington or to the Federalist Party? It was good history, good politics, and good biography for the time, yet the neglect into which it has fallen is due more to the writer than to what he used of the subject. Fourteen years later, in 1818, Wirt's *Life of Patrick Henry*, necessarily largely based on tradition, carried into biography the oratorical flowers of Independence Day, and succeeded so far as to make its transplanted garden a desert place in comparison to a later and saner cultivation. It is something to have manufactured a good book, yet an example that is to be avoided—otherwise the sense of relation would be weakened. Virginia still held the field for a period. In 1825 the life and correspondence of Richard Henry Lee and in 1829 that of Arthur Lee were given out by a grandson of the former. They were defensive, colored by deliberate but mistaken purpose. Both compilations showed how good material could be wasted in an effort to prepare a brief in a cause of secondary importance.

The first compilation of Jefferson's letters, by his grandson Thomas Jefferson Randolph, appeared in 1830. Monroe and Madison, the closest intimates to Jefferson after his presidency, were still living, not to mention some of the opposition whose feelings might be touched. They knew some years in advance that this work was in preparation, yet neither attempted to interfere or to control what should be inserted. Randolph possessed the courage of his necessities, for on the last pages of the last volume he printed the *Anas*, that body of comment which is so characteristic of the Jefferson epos. Yet he did not let stand the criticism of Washington or the word which made John Marshall the mountebank of the X. Y. Z. mission, and he omitted more than half of the record as of lesser importance. Jefferson's opinions invited dissension, and the publication of the volumes led to an exchange of epithets that enlivened, even if it did not much enlighten, the history and practice of politics. Having gone as far as he did, Randolph need have omitted no part of the record. Those who disliked Jefferson were convinced of the soundness of their dislike; those who practised politics as a profession busily engaged themselves in constructing that Jeffersonian myth which still persists and, judiciously used, has exerted a constant effect in hypnotizing the wavering voter.

These lights of the War for Independence used language unrestrained by a fear of publication. They lived in the day of a newspaper which seems singularly harmless for attack. The party scribblers of low character might dip their pens in venom; the very excess of their invective discounted and the small circulation deadened its force. When Callender turned upon Jefferson, his benefactor, he was obliged to set up a sheet of his own, and the few copies in existence are eloquent on his poverty and incapacity. In the respectable press the discussion of men and measures rarely rose above mediocrity, and mere personalities could not explain policies. Hamilton, one of the best controversialists of his time, might have repeated his letter to John Adams six times over, with six different objects, and had either the *Diary* or letters of John Adams seen the light in his day, the pot of discord would have remained at boiling point. Both men in their own time experienced the effect of an untoward publication of confidential communications, and the experience embittered their later years. Hamilton's papers drifted for years looking for a biographer, and when at last in 1840 they were used by a son, his brothers openly expressed their disapprobation and regret on the event.

In this early period of personal relations the editor had no



place. The member of the family sufficed. However marked a curiosity over a public character might exist, it did not extend to his writings. An early experiment (1810) of printing Hamilton's financial papers failed. With the current questions interest ceased, and newspaper discussion rarely dipped into past American history. Precedents and comparisons were drawn from Greece and Rome, not from colonial Britain. In the small number of instances where elaborate defense was deemed proper, it was the leading actor who performed the task—as in Monroe's defense of his French mission and in Edmund Randolph's *Vindication*. A pamphlet would cover the emergency; and it was prepared by an interested party. Yet in the first years the editor appears in a modest but efficient form, dealing with original sources and with some comprehension of the function he was to fulfil.

The earliest example is Ebenezer Hazard and his *Historical Collections*, printed by the author—a euphemism then as now for printed at a loss—in 1792. Wait's *State Papers* (1815) were a forerunner of Force's *Archives*. As to the publication in 1819 of the *Acts and Proceedings of the Convention of 1787* by John Quincy Adams, then secretary of state, as related in his *Memoirs*, he enlists the heartfelt sympathy of everyone who has dealt with original material as arranged by ambitious but badly equipped adventurers in history, or by pious hands directed by filial apprehension. These early essays in printing sources were guided by the proper spirit. Without undue reverence for the written word, they followed the text without modification in language or in intention. Why should this attitude have undergone a change which for half a century persisted in mutilating the text and giving excuse for every vagary of statement?

'Tis woman that seduces all mankind;

By her we first were taught the wheedling arts.

And it was a Massachusetts woman who pointed out the way. Secretly Eliza Susan Quincy compiled a memoir of her grandfather Josiah Quincy, the patriot, and when she had completed the task, she induced her father, Josiah Quincy, to put his name on the title-page and thus assume responsibility for the dark deed. How she doctored the text, altering, omitting, and mutilating as seemed to her proper and best, has only recently become known. I will not say that she violated all the commandments of good editing, but she was remarkably successful in sinning against the great majority. This volume appeared in 1825, and the first volume of Sparks's *Washington* followed nine years later, so perfect an imitation of all

the faults embodied in the Quincy publication, that collusion might be assumed, without the excuse of family reticence.

I wish to be just to Mr. Sparks. Admit that he designed and carried into execution large undertakings, and a series of ten volumes is a large undertaking even now; admit his singleness of purpose and consistency of operation; is it harsh to say that his judgment is condemned by the necessity for going again over the ground he covered, not because of new material discovered or available since his day, but because of an unreliable text? The writings of Washington, Franklin, and Gouverneur Morris and the *Diplomatic Correspondence* which he edited—all have since been republished, and with patience, not from a few samples but from the many, may be discovered the manner in which Sparks misused his opportunity. His good fortune in being a pioneer in this form of compilation, and his industry as an editor, have placed his volumes on the shelves of every self-respecting library, public and private; yet his repute as an authority has been steadily falling.

Deliberate falsification can hardly be charged to these early practitioners in editing. They felt the presence of some who had participated in the events they were to describe. Why print anything unpleasant, or unkind, or partizan, or personal? Why expose the foibles of men looming big as historical characters? These contemporaries, wearied by perpetual party strife, were beyond a capacity to reply; they asked only to be permitted to close their lives in peace. Others were actually in office, honored by the free choice of the electors or by the trust of those who held their office by election. Why raise disputes of the past, much and probably ignorantly discussed at the time, now the ashes of controversy? The supposed necessity of party supplied the newspapers with abuse of individuals, and the pamphlets of the day could match the newspapers in directness and scurrility of language. History and biography should rise to a higher level, and in style attain to some merit. If it bordered on the ultra-patriotic, that was an excusable weakness, for the men of the War of Independence then looked large, larger even than the principles for which they fought.

The influence of official relations must be held responsible for some serious blunders. When Congress assisted to publish Hamilton's works in 1850, it was the son who edited the material; the Jefferson, three years later, was entrusted to the librarian of the Department of State, and he took remarkable liberties with the text—inexcusable, unless we accept the theory that political exigency rather than historical truth guided the undertaking. The dominance

of the South made expedient suppression of some features, for the South had become sensitive to the growing antagonism to slavery and the increase in material power at the North. Even the foreign relations of the United States remained in good part unknown; the executive could give out what it pleased and withhold information on the plea of prejudice to public interests. The Department of State harbors an unmeasured mass of historical material, and has used only what has seemed good to more or less well-informed officials in the past when weighing it in the scale of occasion. Diplomacy, even the open diplomacy of the United States, has had its high victims, and both secretaries of state and agents stand as sacrifices offered to smooth over blunders or to quiet public clamor. What a field for judicious editing!

It may thus be said that the editor has been coming into his own, not rising in importance, but better recognized as a useful albeit somewhat erratic adjunct to the writing of history. The quality of product has improved, and the shadows of family or political doubt are less frequently encountered. Public archives have been made accessible, a generous freedom of use accorded by private owners of papers; and pride of ancestry has contributed its share to the ever increasing quantity of product. If only certain possessors of material could appreciate how far they are like the ostrich, and what damage their aloofness is working on their pet admirations! Imagine trying to prove anything against public morals on John Jay! Yet he has been fastened in a niche of the 1833 model, when reserve darkened reputations. I could name a number of such distorted models, still cramped under a silence that almost confesses guilt. Where papers have been destroyed in the hope that criticism would be ended, the ghosts of old controversies arise and the worst or opposition phases of character are remembered. Descendants who have nestled in self-confidence and wrapped themselves in forgetfulness are pained and shocked to have the old gossip and tradition of their ancestors served up highly spiced in modern journalese. They have only themselves to blame.

For nearly a century after the Declaration of Independence both biography and editing of original materials had not attained success. They lisped, fearful of speaking aloud, and they avoided crucial matters of controversy. Was it this example which led to a series of political autobiographies in the last two generations? From Benjamin F. Butler to George F. Hoar and beyond—the mere writing of the names suggests startling comparisons of product. Was it a suspicion that they could not entrust their reputa-

tions to editors or to biographers which tempted them into a difficult adventure? Was it a desire to anticipate the opinion of contemporaries, and while yet living to taste the sweets of servile flattery? They chatter of many things, but are reticent on those most important to the historian. As appeals to a simple faith, and as childlike murmurings of unrelated facts they awaken wonder without gratifying a reasonable curiosity. To compile such works and then to destroy the original records, as if the last word had been said, is a crime against history, and an unavailing plea in abatement against further consideration. Yet most of those self-constituted apologists have been lawyers, and some of them good lawyers.

To approach such modern instances with due reverence is difficult. Conditions have altered, the standard of greatness has changed, and the demands as well as the responsibilities of biographer and editor are other than were accepted unquestioned a half-century ago. History is better written, and the subject is attracting the best; but autobiography lags behind, good-naturedly accepted for its defects rather than for its virtues. The charm of literary autobiography persists, but the unreliability of political autobiography has come to be a byword. To describe action directly and intention truthfully after the event appears to demand opposite qualities. *Magna pars fui*—the accent is on the *magna*, and the relator exaggerates his own importance while twisting his facts and misstating his motives.

Is it not a form of conceit, and a vulgar form at that, to suppose that the story of a life can be only self-written? Is man so little influenced by circumstances and so greatly moulded by his own will that he can consciously assume to be master of his own fortunes? The self-made man is subject to attacks of assurance which awaken in him an anxiety to tell others how he accomplished it—it referring to any achievement from making a large fortune to writing a popular song. Success is the worst judge of itself, and some other tribunal should take cognizance and, if possible, commit such budding sprouts to safe quarters where they may interchange their confidences without making an undue exhibition of themselves. The thing is possible, for did not an Italian saint not only overcome the Devil but make him confess *all* his sins?

The human machine is self-advertising, for its wants are imperative and its acts come for judgment before an immediate tribunal—public opinion. Is not, then, the desire to write autobiography a confession that some explanation of conduct is to say the least expedient? The atmosphere of publicity in which a public character

of to-day moves gives to surrounding objects and relations a certain distortion. The distortion becomes natural to him, and he wonders why others do not accept him as unquestioningly as formerly, why they adopt a critical attitude with a tendency to open opposition. If he is pushed out from a public career, and gains time for reflection and self-examination, the injustice and unreason of his former constituency appear large and to him are based upon misconception. So he enters upon his defense, and tells the old story in the old way, with distorted vision and with vanished glamour. It requires a greatness of character to stand the test, and there are few great characters. The majority babble, retail half-truths and vamp the worn and patched shreds until they have encased themselves in nothing but their own too transparent self-consciousness, still not undisturbed by doubts. Seeking to invest themselves with a cloudlike splendor and halo as the reward for upright conduct, they retire into the smoke-shield of their own creation, to emerge streaked with smudge. As a mode of defense autobiography is a failure; it too often confirms the old saying, that a man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client. The ghastly skull of St. Charles Borromeo looked out from its gorgeous trappings and surroundings, always a reminder of what he had been—a mortal. As ghastly figures stare from the written pages of autobiography, reminders that the mortal or weak parts dominated the whole, and left a record that is unchangeable.

To the biographer, not too closely related to his subject, and to the editor, belongs the task of telling the truth—not the simple or the whole truth, but as much as the records will afford. The writer of biography has the wider field, the better opportunity, for he may wander far and invoke the dramatic and the picturesque, even infusing into the relation a color of his own. His story may read like a romance, it may be a fairy tale, or it may be a verbal cenotaph wherein nothing of its subject may be found; it soon is weighed, judged, and ticketed for remembrance or oblivion.

An editor is restricted to the written record; the memories of oldest inhabitants and the tradition of generations have no attraction for him. His purpose is to give all that may be of service to our host of anxious inquirers and the ever-increasing number of writers of history, and to give it unvarnished, as the documents contain it. This is not to say that he will be unsympathetic. I defy anyone to live among the records of the past without absorbing some spirit kindred to that which actuated the men of that time. He sees through their eyes, and re-enacts their deeds, with a wider

vision and a knowledge of consequences not vouchsafed to them. Whatever reserve is imposed arises out of a sense of decency; all else may safely be left to the judgment of history. It is good to humanize Washington, to have the means of tracing the tortuous policy of Jefferson, to measure the ability and ambitions of Hamilton, to comprehend the rash but honest conduct of the Adamses, and to wonder at the little greatness of Monroe. We owe these to modern editors, and in no instance did they inflict injury upon good repute, nor did they greatly modify the great lines of historical writing. They supplied treasuries of fact from which incidents and characters may be written or newly written. To furnish the material in its full and unaltered shape—that is the achievement of the change which has come to editorial methods in a generation.

True perspective requires time and space, and neither historian nor editor can use material of the day in the hope of attaining finality. Yet both are in possession of a trained quality of which few journalists, few civil and military officials can boast. A knowledge of what has gone before, of past events, a habit of analyzing character, of combining facts and weighing evidence, constitute an added sense in seeking some solid foundation in the welter of to-day. They have tested the politicians' position. They know that from the very beginning of its history the country has been in a chronic state of crisis, requiring the election of this or that man to office, demanding sacrifices which constitute the stock claim of the politician to reward; that the years are strewn with such sacrifices, and that the number of pretended and willing saviors of the country would fill several Valhallas. They know that family, censors, and state are unavailing against time, and that no cause has been without its evil features which cannot be suppressed and ought not to be forgotten. They know that no human agency can belie the character for which the man himself is responsible. The inevitableness of history lies before them in too many examples to be neglected. The editor deals with individuals, the historian with generals. The cultivation of a balanced and non-partizan spirit and utterance, no small accomplishment, brings its reward in confidence and clarity of vision.

What is the application of this excursion? For three years the country has been under a stress which has tested its people and its government. In the mass of interested discussion and propaganda, licit and illicit, it has been difficult not to take a position and express the faith that is in us. Even before actual participation in the war necessary information was wanting. Of partial statements the number was and is in excess, but it may be doubted if the fullest

exposure of motives and performance will much change general opinion. The extremist is beyond change, and among these extremists on both sides are some historians. Their honesty of conviction is not to be questioned, but their violence of expression is to be regretted. Exaggeration in language is not confined to the newspaper. The time is not yet come for a final weighing of evidence, for we are living, as in the England of the Restoration, under a "Royal Gazette". Cables and mails are under a censorship which tends to become more rigid; discussion of governmental policy and execution is under a threatened interference by officials, who are wanting in experience and are fallible and extremely sensitive to currents of public opinion; and American opinion is subject to excitements, fitful and destructive of reputations. But unless a man sells his soul he can be heard and answered, or left to the certainties of time. It is all very well to speak of the sober second thought of the people; the first thought may not be sober and may inflict great injury, and in war times the first thought is explosive. How long has it been since our writers of text-books on history consented to modify their denunciation of Great Britain? How many years have allowed the war with Mexico to pose as a shocking example of greed and broken faith? The word rebel as applied to the South is a survival; the bitterness has slowly turned into sweetness, and the glory of honorable conflict is shared between the two sections. Much of what parades as history to-day will fortunately sink into the forgetfulness of the future, to be exhumed at times as curious examples of misdirected energy and ill-exercised thought. What remains, clarified of its partizanship, may serve for real history. It will be two generations before the full publication of documents can begin, and then will be applied the tests of fair judgment—the real editing. In the meanwhile we should cultivate, as far as possible, the editorial attitude, keeping our minds open, restraining our criticism lest it lead to injustice and persecution, avoiding personalities, and exercising the same patience and restraint under wrongs and violations of good faith as have placed our country with an unsoiled record at the front of a world movement.

WORTHINGTON CHAUNCEY FORD.